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CHILE: Government Intimidation. (U)

(U) Witnesses to the 2 July burning of two Chilean youths reportedly have been threatened by alleged members of the security forces to change their testimony implicating the military.

(U) One eyewitness was briefly kidnaped, blindfolded, and threatened if he did not change his testimony, while another witness was detained on 23 August, purportedly for a violation of the arms control law.

~~(C)~~ Sources within the Catholic Church's Vicariate of Solidarity indicated two other witnesses were also detained on the 25th by order of the military prosecutor. Because of these actions, the Vicariate was concerned that the government was trying to derail the investigation of the burnings by harassing or prosecuting witnesses in the case.

COMMENT: [REDACTED] The Chilean Government has changed its story several times regarding its involvement in the burning and subsequent death of Rodrigo Rojas, and it apparently has undertaken a campaign of intimidation to pressure the witnesses. Reliable sources have previously stated that security forces were involved in the burning, and the military court recently changed its charge against the army personnel involved from manslaughter to murder. Some members of the government will quite likely continue to intimidate the witnesses in order to persuade them to change their testimony, thereby clearing the regime of any responsibility for the crime. [REDACTED]

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